

# State Senator • Deb Cherry news 08/04



*For The Constituents of the 26th District*

## A Note From Senator Cherry

Dear Friends,

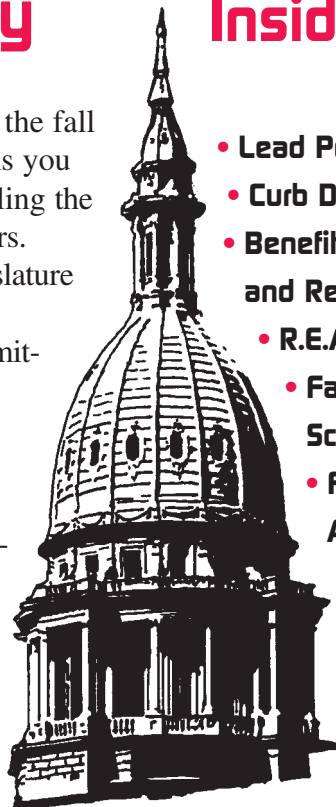
As summer comes to a close, we face the certainties of the fall – return to school, cooler days and a new state fiscal year. As you may already know, the State Legislature is hard at work, settling the budget that has become increasingly challenging in recent years. Through hard work and cooperation, the governor and the legislature have hammered out some of the most crucial budget items.

I ask for your continued understanding and personal commitment to rally for the economic and social well being of all Michiganders. I will continue to fight for a fair and caring government that serves its people.

Long term care, after school programs, environmental issues and healthy children remain in the focus of my legislative lens. I pledge to continue to advocate for you as your Senator.

*Deb Cherry*

Deb Cherry  
State Senator • 26th District



## Inside

- Lead Poisoning
- Curb Drug Use
- Benefits of Giving... and Receiving
- R.E.A.D.Y., Set, Read!
- Fall Into After School Activities
- Family Programs Available
- Coffee Hour
- Town Hall Meetings

## Working to Improve Long Term Care

**T**he health and welfare of our seniors is important to the success of Michigan. So I was proud to join the Medicaid Long Term Care Task Force as a gubernatorial appointee. The task force is specifically designed to improve Michigan's long-term care service network.

The task force, created by Governor Granholm, is comprised of lawmakers, church organizations, senior groups and assisted living providers.

Among several directives, the Governor charged the task force with analyzing and reporting the relationship between state and federal Medicaid long-term care funding and its

viability over the long term. The group is also responsible for effectively reducing barriers to an efficient system of home-based, community-based and institutional long term care services.

"The work of this task force will be vitally important as we seek to improve community-based care for seniors, eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers, and lessen the enormous pressure on the state's Medicaid budget," Gov. Granholm said in an official statement.

The task force is scheduled to issue a report on our activities in October.

## How To Contact Me

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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

## Lawmakers Attack Lead Poisoning

Legislators created a five-bill package that addresses lead poisoning. Governor Granholm signed two of the lead package bills into law. HB 5117 and HB

5119 are now public acts (PA's 54 & 55, respectively). They regulate lead poisoning testing and reporting.

Three bills remain in process and are expected to be passed

soon. Among other aspects, the bills create a Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Commission, establish a Lead Safe Housing Registry and provide penalties for rental

agents/landlords/ owners who rent or lease a rental unit with prior knowledge of lead-based paint hazards within that unit.

Concern for children is a major focus of the legislation. Children's bodies absorb 50 percent of the lead they ingest compared to a 10 percent rate in adults. Also, because their systems are still developing, children are more susceptible to environmental threats. A pollution exposure that would not harm an adult may cause life-long problems for a child because of their longer life spans and evolving central nervous systems.



## The Benefits of Giving...and Receiving

The Legislature has passed a package of bills designed to make it easier for certain people to obtain a used car from a charity. The bills help low-income people who need automobiles to get to work, and who meet certain qualifications for the tax break. If you are on public assistance, have a driver's license, and will use the car to get to work, you may qualify for the tax break.

Under the current law, a

person has to pay a 6 percent use tax on the fair market value of a car that is donated to them by a charity. This can result in a needy person having to pay hundreds of dollars for an otherwise free automobile. However, under these bills, beginning in January 2005, a person who qualifies for the tax break will not have to pay the use tax.

Charities should have forms available next year to determine whether a recipient

qualifies for the new tax break.

Also, the same package of bills provides a state tax break of up to \$50 (single filer) or \$100 (joint filer) to the person who donates a vehicle to the charity. These bills will help people who need the help the most, while providing a tax break to people willing to donate their cars. I sponsored one of the bills in the Senate.

## Courts Expanded to Curb Drug Use

Earlier this month, Governor Granholm signed into law a bill package that expands the use of Drug Courts. These court-administered drug treatment programs for youthful and non-violent offenders are designed to help those with dependency on alcohol and any type of drugs earn a new lease on life. There are prerequisites to acceptance into the program and participants are subject to a series of re-evaluations to remain in the program. It is important to note that if participants fail to complete the program, they will be sen-

tenced on the original charges.

Another provision of the Drug Court legislative package authorizes the court to order participation in a drug treatment court as a condition of probation. The law allows the court to delay sentencing for up to one year until the defendant proves eligibility for probation or some other leniency compati-

ble with rehabilitation.





## Fall Into After School Activities

**A**t a time when more children are spending at least three hours a day unattended, the need for quality after-school programming is great. As the new school year begins, a quality before-school or after-school program can provide a safe place for kids and additional learning opportunities.

The state has put together a listing of programs of after school learning and fun. Called

MICASE, this catalog of programs includes after-school and weekend experiences for pre-kindergarten through high school students. If you are a school, an after-school care provider, a children's agency or a parent, start here to locate experiences near you.

Go to [www.micase.org](http://www.micase.org) or contact my office to learn more details about after school activities in Genesee and Oakland Counties.



*Senator Cherry celebrates her second bill signing ceremony with Governor Jennifer Granholm, Lt. Gov. John Cherry and Nathan Faris, who was visiting the capitol for a job shadowing program.*

## R.E.A.D.Y., Set, Read!

**R**eadng is fundamental. It is the foundation of freedom and the key to prosperity. Lawmakers are adamant about our dedication to providing an equal educational opportunity to all of Michigan's children.

I, like my legislative colleagues, believe that early childhood education is essential in the development of our youth. Through the R.E.A.D.Y. program, the state has increased its efforts to reach every child in the state.

The state developed the R.E.A.D.Y. program in 1998 to increase parent and caregiver awareness of childhood literacy. The program reiterates the importance of early childhood development and learning.

Since its inception, R.E.A.D.Y. has become one of the most successful early childhood parent information programs in Michigan and throughout the country. Each kit contains over a dozen educational materials including: a quality children's book and pocket-size book list; learning activities and reminder magnet; a music cassette; a child development video and booklet; a child development ages and stages wheel and other products to help young children learn and succeed.

Go to [www.michigan.gov/greatstart](http://www.michigan.gov/greatstart) or call my office at 866-305-2126 for more information.



*Senator Cherry greets a student attending hunter safety classes at the Grand Blanc Huntsman's Club.*

## Family Programs Available

**T**he Michigan Assistance and Referral Service (MARS) is a pre-screening tool that allows you to find programs offered by the State of Michigan that may help families in need with assistance for medical, nutritional, food, day care, temporary cash or other expenses.

MARS is made up of several different parts:

- 1. A Few Easy Questions** - answer questions to find programs that can help your family.
- 2. Program Information** - MARS provides links to more information about the programs that could help your family.
- 3. Income Estimator** - none of the information you enter in the income estimator will be saved.
- 4. Application Requirements** - MARS is only an estimate of your eligibility.
- 5. Finding an Office and Applying** - MARS provides links to offices where you may apply for programs.

Go to [http://www.michigan.gov/emi/1,1303,7-102-112-34098-219\\_124\\_495-,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/emi/1,1303,7-102-112-34098-219_124_495-,00.html) for further information. If the Internet is inaccessible, call my office at (866) 305-2126.





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# Senator Cherry Holds Coffee Hour

*Please join me for coffee and conversation. I will be there to discuss what is important to the community.*

**Monday • September 27, 2004**  
**Forest Township Hall • 130 Main Street • Otisville**  
**7:30 am - 9:00 am**

*Check my website frequently to keep updated on future coffee hours.*



# Town Hall Meetings Scheduled – Open Forums –

I have scheduled the following dates for Town Hall Meetings which provide an open format for constituents to bring issues or concerns to my attention:

**Monday • October 18, 2004**

**Waterford Covert Center**  
**1150 Scott Lake Road**  
**Waterford, MI**

**7 – 8:30 p.m.**

**Friday • October 22, 2004**

**Davison Senior Center**  
**10135 Lapeer Road**  
**Davison, MI**

**10 – 11 a.m.**

**Mark  
Your  
Calendar**



# Email Newsletter Available



I am currently sending out periodic email newsletters to keep you informed about what's going on in Lansing, as well as other important information from around the state. If you would like to receive this newsletter, please send your email address to:

**sendcherry@senate.  
michigan.gov**

and I'll be sure to add you to our mailing list. Please also visit my State Senate website,

**www.senate.michigan.  
gov/cherry**

which will keep you up to date on my activities in Lansing as well as in the district.